

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A container conveying system for conveying containers containing substrates such as wafers and reticles within a clean room, said container conveying system comprising:

a conveyance apparatus comprising a main portion for conveyance of the containers along a main conveyance path, substantially in parallel with an array of plural a plurality of treatment apparatuses, and at least one branch portion extending from said main portion toward said array, for temporarily holding containers in standby to convey said containers ; and

a transfer apparatus capable of moving horizontally and freely in an upper ceiling space within the said clean room, above the conveyance apparatus;

a lifter supported by the transfer apparatus for raising, lowering and rotating a container;

said array of plural treatment apparatuses extending along being arranged on at least one side of main conveyance path a passage and respectively provided with interface devices on the side facing the main conveyance path; said passage;

said interface devices capable of temporarily receiving the said containers and moving the said substrates from the interiors of the said containers to the interiors of the said treatment apparatuses and vice versa in a hermetically sealed atmosphere; and

said transfer apparatus and lifter transferring the said containers between said conveyance apparatus and said interface devices treatment apparatuses or between said interface devices treatment apparatuses .

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently amended) The conveyor conveying system according to claim 1 2 , wherein said main portion provides plural conveyance paths which are arranged vertically in parallel.

4. (Currently amended) The conveyor system according to claim 12, wherein said main portion provides plural conveyance paths which are arranged horizontally transversely in parallel.

5. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 12, wherein each of said main and branch portions of said conveyance apparatus units is constituted by a conveyor.

6. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 1 comprising, wherein said transfer apparatus comprises at least two of said transfer apparatuses and lifters respectively supported by said transfer apparatuses apparatus units .

7. (Currently amended) A container conveying system for conveying containers containing substrates such as wafers and reticles within a clean room, said container conveying system comprising:

a conveyance apparatus, disposed substantially in parallel with and above an array of plural a plurality of treatment apparatuses, in an upper ceiling space within said clean room to convey said containers, said conveyance apparatus comprising a main portion for conveyance of the containers along a main conveyance path and a plurality of branch portions extending from said main portion toward said array, each branch portion providing a branch conveyance path for temporarily holding containers in standby; and

a transfer apparatus capable of moving freely in a vertical plane extending along said conveyance apparatus in the said upper ceiling space within the said clean room, above said conveyance apparatus; ;

a lifter supported by the transfer apparatus for raising, lowering and rotating a container;

said plural treatment apparatuses arranged on at least one side of the main conveyance path a passage and respectively provided with interface devices on the side facing the main conveyance path; said passage;

said interface devices capable of temporarily receiving the said containers and moving the said substrates from the interiors of the said containers to the interiors of said treatment apparatuses and vice versa in a hermetically sealed atmosphere; ; and

said transfer apparatus and lifter transferring the said containers between said conveyance apparatus and said interface devices treatment apparatuses or between said interface devices treatment apparatuses .

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 7:
wherein an array of said plural treatment apparatuses is are arranged on each of opposing both sides of the main portion of the conveyance apparatus said passage;
wherein said conveyance apparatus comprises two conveyors respectively defining has two conveyance apparatus units traveling respectively along two main conveyance paths running in opposite directions; which are a going path and a returning path; and
wherein a said transfer apparatus is provided on each of the opposing the right and left sides of the two main said conveyance paths apparatus .

10. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 9, wherein the said two main conveyance paths are arranged horizontally transversely in parallel.

11. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 9, wherein said two main conveyance paths are arranged vertically in parallel.

12. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 4 3, wherein each of said main and branch portions of said conveyance apparatus units is constituted by a conveyor.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Canceled)

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 4 comprising, wherein said transfer apparatus comprises at least two of said transfer apparatuses and lifters respectively supported by said transfer apparatus apparatus units .

17. (Currently amended) The container conveying system according to claim 5
~~comprising, wherein said transfer apparatus comprises at least two of said transfer~~
~~apparatuses and lifters respectively supported by said transfer apparatuses apparatus~~
~~units.~~

18. (Canceled)

19. (New) The conveyor system according to claim 1 wherein said main conveyance path is linearly straight.

20. (New) The conveyor system according to claim 4 wherein said plural conveyance paths are linearly straight.

21. (New) The conveyor system according to claim 7 wherein said main conveyance path is linearly straight.

22. (New) The conveyor system according to claim 9 wherein said two main conveyance paths are linearly straight.